



BIODIVERSITY TRAIL

Discover

Natural Treasures of
the Charlotte Region



About the Trail

Welcome to the Central Carolinas – a region with over 106,000 acres of protected lands, rich in natural and cultural history.

Throughout this growing metropolis, you will find unique natural treasures, from rare Piedmont Prairies and upland depression swamp forests, to oak-hickory woodlands and bottomland forests. These natural communities, along with the region's rivers, lakes, streams, and other wetlands, provide food, water and shelter for a variety of wildlife. A careful

observer could find some 320 species of birds, 70 species of fish, 40 species of mammals, 80 species of amphibians and reptiles, a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates, and thousands of species of native plants.

The Biodiversity Trail celebrates this diversity through a coordinated system of natural areas connected by their unique wildlife and natural communities. The Trail is modeled after watchable wildlife trails, birding trails, and heritage corridors in other states. It is not a physical path, but rather features properties owned by federal, state, local, and non-profit agencies in a 14-county region of the Carolinas. Sites along the trail are open to the public, allowing people to experience and discover these special places.

The Biodiversity Trail is an extension of the Strategic Regional Open Space Framework for the Central Carolinas, and was developed to create awareness and support for the region's existing green assets and natural areas. Initiated by the Stewardship Advisory Council, a citizen's advisory group for Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department, the Biodiversity Trail is a dynamic project that will grow through time and involve partners from throughout the region.





1. Anne Springs Close Greenway
2. Broad River Greenway
3. Cane Creek Park
4. Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge
5. Crowder's Mountain State Park
6. Dan Nicholas Park
7. Frank Liske Park
8. Freedom Park and Charlotte Nature Museum
9. James K. Polk Memorial
10. Kings Mountain State Park and Kings Mountain National Military Park
11. Lake Norman State Park
12. Landsford Canal State Park
13. Latta Plantation Nature Preserve
14. Lower McAlpine Creek and McMullen Creek Greenways
15. McAlpine Creek Park and Greenway
16. McDowell Nature Preserve
17. McGuire Nuclear Station and Energy Explorium
18. Morrow Mountain State Park
19. Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge
20. Reedy Creek Nature Preserve
21. Riverbend Park
22. South Fork River Rail Trail
23. South Mountains State Park
24. UNC-Charlotte Botanical Gardens

How to Use this Guide

This guide provides a regional locator map denoting the 14 counties and each site with a reference number. Each site includes a brief description, highlighting the size of the property, unique flora and fauna, best wildlife viewing opportunities, and any historical significance. You will also find more detailed site locator maps, directions from the nearest major highway, hours of operation, and contact information, as well as additional information such as the site's major natural communities, best seasons to visit, special features, and possible restrictions or limitations. Symbols (see Legend) indicate services and amenities available at each site.

As you travel among sites, look for the Central Carolinas Biodiversity Trail logo. You may want to supplement this guide with local maps. It is also recommended that you call ahead to verify each site's current hours and conditions.

LEGEND



Handicap Accessibility



Fishing



Restrooms



Hiking Trails



Information Available
(staff, kiosks, nature center, programs)



Picnic Facilities



Biking Trails



Canoeing



Camping



Horseback Riding Trails



Anne Springs Close Greenway

York County

Unique Features:

With over 2,300 acres and 32 miles of trails, this site offers the potential to observe over 190 species of wildflowers and a diversity of other wildlife. 160 species of birds have been documented on the greenway's wooded hillsides, open fields, old railway bed, bottomlands, and seven lakes. A self-guided brochure is available for the one mile loop trail around 28-acre Lake Haigler and the Nature Center offers educational programs and guided nature walks. The area includes the historic Nation Ford Road, part of the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road and a pathway for Native Americans, settlers, soldiers, traders and trappers for hundreds of years. Children will enjoy exploring century old log homes and the 125-foot suspension bridge that spans Steele Creek.



Habitat:

Grassland, Upland Forest, Floodplain Forest

Additional Information:

Day use fees vary by use type. Fishing for members only.

Directions:

From Interstate 77, Exit 90. Travel east on Carowinds Boulevard/U.S. 21-Bypass. Continue for 2.6 miles and turn left into the main entrance.



Hours:

Open daily 7:00 a.m. to Sunset

Contact Information:

Anne Springs Close Greenway
P.O. Box 1209
Fort Mill, SC 29716
803-548-7252
leroyssprings.com/greenway.html



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Broad River Greenway

Cleveland County

Unique Features:

This 1,500-acre greenway along the Broad River is an excellent place to see a diversity of plants and wildlife.

Twelve miles of trails are located on both sides of the river for scenic nature hikes.

There is also a 2,000 foot paved handicap accessible trail that provides opportunities to experience the site. Many of the native plants encountered along the greenway are identified with interpretive signs and visitors can explore the historic Phifer Cabin, an 1850's log cabin recently relocated from King Mountain.



Habitats:

Floodplain Forest, Upland Forest

Seasonal Information:

Seasonal programs and events are planned on the greenway. Visit their website or call for more information.

Additional Information:

Phifer Cabin open only on Sunday from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Directions:

From Interstate 85, Exit 10B. Travel west on U.S. 74 through Shelby and turn left onto U.S. 150. Continue through Boiling Springs and travel an additional 3.3 miles to the Broad River. The greenway parking lot is located on the left, just before the bridge.

Hours:

Open daily Sunrise to Sunset

Contact Information:

Broad River Council
PO Box 2626
Shelby, NC 28151
704-434-2357
www.broadrivergreenway.com



Biodiversity Trail Fact:

Thirty-three federal and state endangered or threatened plant and animal species can be found in the region. Natural areas along the Biodiversity Trail provide critical habitat for many of these species but also provide food, water, and shelter necessary to keep common species common.



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Cane Creek Park

Union County

Unique Features:

This 1,050-acre park includes the 350-acre Cane Creek Lake, home to some of the best largemouth bass fishing in the state as well as bluegill, crappie, and catfish. The

park has 15 miles of trails, including ten miles that are open to horseback riding. A diversity of aquatic and terrestrial habitats provide opportunities for viewing a variety of reptile and amphibian species, as well as over 100 species of birds.



Habitats:

Grassland, Wetland, Upland Forest, Floodplain Forest

Seasonal Information:

Swimming area and other activities offered from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Campground and boat ramp open year round.

Directions:

From U.S. 74 near Monroe, take N.C. 200 South. Travel approximately 11 miles and turn left onto Potters Road. Travel approximately 2.5 miles and turn right onto Harkey Road. Continue approximately 1.4 miles. The park entrance will be on the left.

Hours:

Vary seasonally, call ahead.

Contact Information:

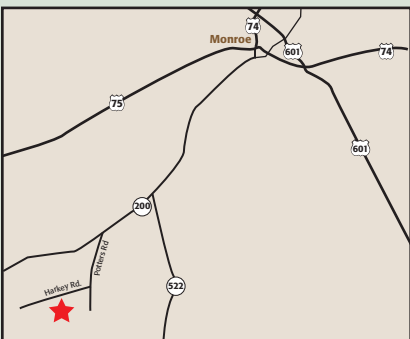
Union County Parks and Recreation

5213 Harkey Road

Waxhaw, NC 28173

704-843-3919

www.co.union.nc.us/gov_offices/parks/parks.htm





Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge

Mecklenburg County

Unique Features:

A 660-acre peninsula extending into Mountain Island Lake, Cowan's Ford Wildlife Refuge protects a diversity of natural

communities, four miles of shoreline,

and the Duck Cove natural heritage site. As a Mecklenburg County nature preserve, the refuge provides habitat for 206 species of birds, more than any site in Mecklenburg County and is part of the Mountain Island Lake Important Bird Area, designated by the National Audubon Society due to its diversity of wintering waterfowl and breeding and migratory songbird species. In addition, 20 species of mammals, 22 species of reptiles, 12 species of amphibians, and 36 species of butterflies have been documented here. Among the unusual species that have been found at the refuge are: bald eagle, bobcat, river otter, silverbell, and southern rein orchid. An observation deck provides excellent views of several small impoundments where waterfowl are abundant during the winter and a large grassland area where white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, and raptors are common year-round.



Habitats:

Upland Forest, Wetland, Grassland, Floodplain Forest

Seasonal Information:

Waterfowl peak in winter. Ospreys nest late spring to early summer.

Peak neotropical migratory bird viewing from late April to early May.

Additional Information:

Public access to the refuge is restricted to the main gravel road and the observation deck area, unless accompanied by Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation staff on a program or tour.

Directions:

From Interstate 77, Exit 16B. Travel Sunset Road West for approximately 1 mile. Turn right onto Beatties Ford Road and travel north for 6.5 miles. Turn left onto Neck Road. Travel 4 miles until the road bears left and turns to gravel.

Continue half a mile to the refuge entrance.

Hours:

Open daily 7:00 a.m. – Sunset.

Contact Information:

Latta Plantation
Nature Center
6211 Sample Road
Huntersville, NC 28078
704-875-1391
www.parkandrec.com



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Crowders Mountain State Park

Gaston County

Unique Features:

This 5,094-acre state park, with its impressive rock cliffs, babbling creeks, and mature hardwood forests is a grand place to observe an impressive array of native plants and wildlife. In the spring you will see rhododendrons, mountain laurel, flowering dogwood, and a diversity of wildflowers. In the fall, the hardwoods put on a striking display of colors and migrating hawks soar over the summits and cliff faces. Hike one of the 12 miles of trails and you are sure to be rewarded in any season. At 1,705 feet, Kings Pinnacle is the highest summit in the southwest Piedmont. Park rangers provide a wide variety of programs and hikes to further your experience of this rare monadnock environment.



Habitats:

Upland Forest, Rocky Summit, Floodplain Forest

Directions:

From Interstate 85, Exit 13. Travel east on Edgewood Road for 0.75 mile. Turn right onto Franklin Boulevard/U.S. 74 and travel approximately 1.9 miles. Turn left onto Sparrow Springs Road and continue for approximately 2.5 miles. Turn right again, continuing on Sparrow Springs Road. The main park entrance will be on the right.

Hours:

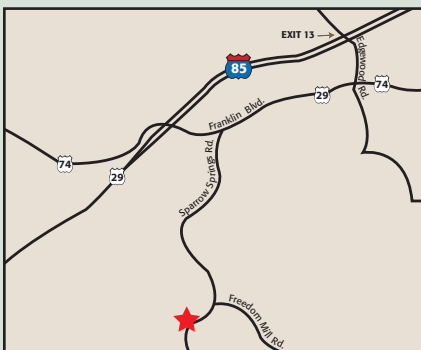
November-February, 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

March and October, 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

April, May, September, 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

June-August, 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Closed Christmas Day



Park office hours
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. daily
Closed state holidays

Contact Information:

Crowders Mountain State Park
522 Park Office Lane
Kings Mountain, NC 28086
704-853-5375
www.ncsparks.net



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Dan Nicholas Park

Rowan County

Unique Features:

This 435-acre park near High Rock Lake is an excellent place to search for spring ephemeral wildflowers, especially along the wooded slopes and small streams



that drain the area. Two miles of trails guide visitors throughout the mostly forested park and around 10-acre Lake Murtis, where waterfowl can be seen during the winter. The Rowan Nature and Learning Center has a diversity of exhibits on the park's natural habitats, houses live animals from black bears to painted turtles, and offers a variety of special workshops and programs on natural history.

Habitat:

Upland Forest, Floodplain Forest

Seasonal Information:

Spring wildflowers peak the first week in April.

Additional Information:

Campground open 7 days a week year-round.

Directions:

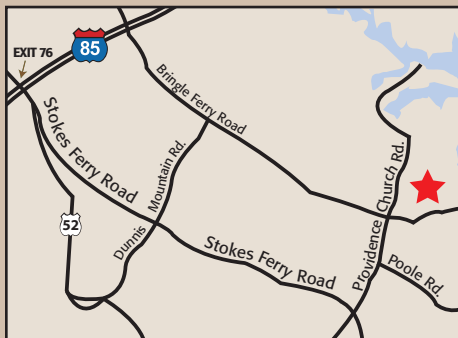
From Interstate 85, Exit 76. Travel east on U.S. 52 approximately 0.5 mile. Turn left onto Stokes Ferry Road. Continue 8 miles to Providence Church Road and turn left. Continue 1.7 miles to Bringle Ferry Road. Turn right and travel 0.4 mile to the park entrance on the left.

Hours:

Open daily 7:00 a.m. - Sunset

Contact Information:

Rowan County Parks and Recreation Department
6800 Bringle Ferry Road
Salisbury, NC 28146
704-636-2089
www.co.rowan.nc.us/parks





Frank Liske Park

Cabarrus County

Unique Features:

This 230-acre park includes a 1-mile nature trail that provides an opportunity to explore several habitats in close proximity. The 10-acre lake is a good place to view waterfowl during the winter or enjoy fishing year-round. Some areas in the park are located on the Sinai volcanic ring dike, which produces basic soils, a striking contrast to the more common acidic soils in the Piedmont.

The unique geology of this nationally significant natural heritage area also creates a number of small, yet beautiful waterfalls along the park's streams. Loggerhead shrikes have occasionally been seen along the edge of the park's expansive fields.



Habitat:

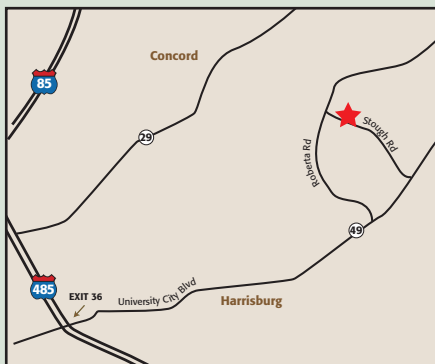
Grassland, Upland Forest, Floodplain Forest

Directions:

From Interstate 485, Exit 36. Travel east on N.C. 49 for approximately 5 miles. Turn left onto Roberta Road and travel approximately 3 miles. Turn right onto Stough Road. The park entrance is on the left.

Hours:

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.
April – October. Hours vary in winter.



Contact Information:

Cabarrus County Parks
and Recreation Department
4001 Stough Road
Concord, NC 28025
704-920-2700
www.co.cabarrus.nc.us/Parks



Freedom Park & Charlotte Nature Museum

Mecklenburg County

Unique Features:

This 98-acre urban park near downtown Charlotte is teeming with ball fields, playgrounds, and humanity, but the observant visitor can also



view a diversity of wildlife. Those seeking contact with nature should look along the restored Little Sugar Creek for Gulf Coast spiny softshell turtles, great blue herons, and northern water snakes. The 7-acre lake offers fishing year-round and opportunities to view other aquatic turtles and waterfowl. The Charlotte Nature Museum located across the creek from the park is an urban nature center that exhibits plants and animals of the Piedmont including an ever-changing indoor butterfly garden. This site is located along Little Sugar Creek Greenway.

Habitats:

Floodplain Forest

Directions:

From Interstate 77, Exit 6A. Bear right onto Woodlawn Road and travel east for two miles. Turn left onto Park Road. Travel north for one mile and turn right onto Princeton Avenue. Continue for 0.5 mile and turn left onto Sterling Road. The Charlotte Nature Museum entrance will be on the left.

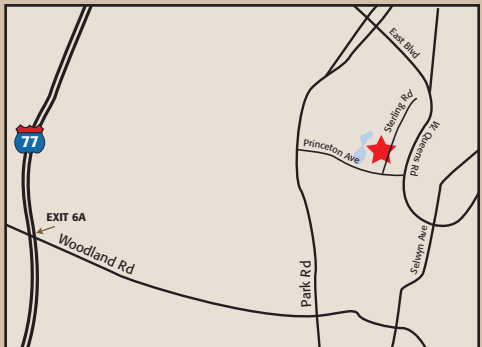
Hours:

Charlotte Nature Museum, Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.,
Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Sunday 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Freedom Park, Open daily 7:00 a.m. - Sunset

Contact Information:

Charlotte Nature Museum
1658 Sterling Road
Charlotte, NC 28209
704-372-6261 ext. 605
www.discoveryplace.org

Freedom Park
1900 East Boulevard
Charlotte, NC 28209
704-336-3854
www.parkandrec.com



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James K. Polk Memorial

Mecklenburg County

Unique Features:

This memorial to the eleventh President of the United States is located on land originally owned by his parents in Pineville, N.C. The log buildings are not originals but are period pieces from the early 1800's. The visitor center houses exhibits and displays from the Polk era and features a 12-minute video entitled "Young Hickory." A variety of historical programs are offered throughout the year. The property lies along Little Sugar Creek, with a short trail and picnic tables where great blue herons and white-tailed deer are often spotted. The site will eventually be located along Little Sugar Creek Greenway.



Habitat:

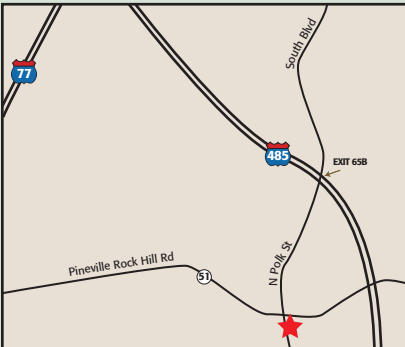
Grassland, Upland Forest

Seasonal Information:

Wildflowers peak the first week in April.

Directions:

From Interstate 485, Exit 65B. Travel south on old U.S. 521 through Pineville for approximately 1.5 miles. The entrance is on the left.



Hours:

April – October:
Tuesday - Saturday
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
November – March:
Tuesday – Saturday
10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Contact Information:

James K. Polk Memorial
PO Box 475
Pineville, NC 28134
704-889-7145
www.polk.nchistoricsites.org



Biodiversity Trail Fact:

The 14-county Central Carolinas region is served by three major watersheds – the Catawba, Yadkin-Pee Dee, and Broad – combining for 10,361 miles of rivers and streams. These rivers are the lifeblood for all the natural communities and ecosystems they flow through as well as sources of drinking water, electricity, and outdoor recreation.



Central Carolinas
BIODIVERSITY TRAIL

Kings Mountain State Park & Kings Mountain National Military Park

York County

Unique Features:

These two parks, encompassing over 10,800 acres along the North Carolina - South Carolina border, are operated independently by South Carolina State Parks and the National Park Service, but share a common border and main road. They have combined to provide 32 miles of trails, 16 of which are open to horseback riders, through the eastern foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Visitors can hike an interpretive trail to learn about local flora and fauna, visit the Living History Farm that demonstrates early pioneer lifestyles, or walk through the footsteps of those who fought the 1780 Battle of Kings Mountain, all in the same visit. Two lakes on the property offer numerous recreational activities and a campground at the state park offers overnight accommodations.



Habitat:

Upland Forest, Grassland

Seasonal Information:

Peak neotropical migratory bird viewing from late April to early May.

Additional Information:

Fees charged for park entrance, camping, equestrian camping, and seasonal non-motorized boat rentals. Call for details.

Directions:

From Interstate 85, Exit 8. Turn left onto S.C. 161 and travel across the NC/SC state line. State Park entrance is on the right.

Hours:

State Park, Open daily 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. EST,

7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. DST

Military Park, Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Saturday – Sunday 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Contact Information:

Kings Mountain State Park

1277 Park Road

Blacksburg, SC 29702

803-222-3209

www.southcarolinaparks.com

Kings Mountain National

Military Park

2625 Park Road

Blacksburg, SC 29702

864-936-7921

www.nps.gov/kimo/home.htm



Lake Norman State Park

Iredell County

Unique Features:

This 1,548-acre state park was formed in 1962, when Duke Power Company donated land on the northeastern shore of Lake Norman, the largest man-made body of water in the state.



Thirteen miles of shoreline and its own 33-acre lake provide boating and fishing access as well as numerous opportunities for viewing waterfowl and wading birds. Downed trees and dead snags from Hurricane Hugo in 1989 provide excellent habitat for woodpeckers, and up to six species can be seen in the park. Eight miles of hiking and 6.7 miles of mountain bike trails explore the park's other habitats, including mixed pine-hardwood forests and moist, floodplain forests which provide opportunities to observe over 33 species of amphibians and reptiles, 19 species of mammals, and 125 species of birds.

Habitat:

Upland Forest, Floodplain Forest

Seasonal Information:

Waterfowl peak in the winter, while great blue herons, green herons, and ospreys, may be encountered along lake shallows in summer. Shorebirds rest in these areas during spring and fall migrations. Wildflowers peak in April and May.

Additional Information:

Seasonal canoe and pedalboat rentals. Swimming area open May - September.

Directions:

From Interstate 77, Exit 42. Travel north on U.S. 21 to Troutman. Turn left on Wagner Street and then turn right on State Park Road, which leads directly into the park.

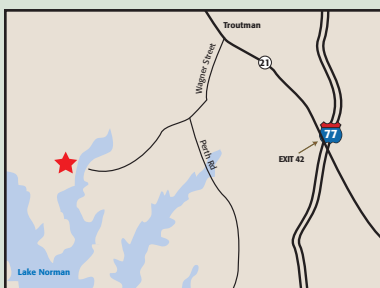
Hours:

November – February, 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

March and October, 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

April, May, September, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

June – August, 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.



Contact Information:

Lake Norman State Park
159 Inland Sea Lane
Troutman, NC 28166
704-528-6350
www.ncsparks.net



Unique Features:

This 448-acre park along the Catawba River teems with wildlife from salamanders and turtles, to river otters and muskrats, to ospreys and bald eagles. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the park includes some of the best preserved 19th-century river canals in South Carolina, stone bridges, locks, an historic mill site, and a lockkeeper's house. Two miles of trails lead along the river and the canal system, which during the 1820's was the height of cotton barge travel. The park's mature floodplain forest of oaks, sweetgums, hickories, and river birch provide excellent habitat for migrating birds and breeding species such as prothonotary warbler and scarlet tanager. The river's unique rocky shoals are home to the world's largest population of the rare rocky shoals spider-lily which in late spring covers the river in a spectacular blanket of white.

**Habitats:**

Floodplain Forest

Seasonal Information:

Spider-lilies peak bloom between mid-May and early June. Bald eagles nest late winter and early spring. Peak neotropical migratory birds in early April to mid-May and mid-September to early October.

Additional Information:

Interpretive exhibits about the canal system in the historic lockkeeper's house. Nominal park entrance fee charged.

Directions:

From Interstate 77, Exit 77.

Turn left on S.C. 21 and travel approximately 16 miles. Turn left on Landsford Road and travel 1.5 miles to the park entrance.

Hours:

Thursday – Monday

9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Contact Information:

Landsford Canal State Park

2051 Park Drive

Catawba, SC 29704

803-789-5800

www.southcarolinaparks.com



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Latta Plantation Nature Preserve

Mecklenburg County

Unique Features:

This 1,338 acre preserve, Mecklenburg County's largest, forms a green peninsula extending into Mountain Island Lake. Sixteen miles of trails, thirteen of which are open to horseback riding, provide nature enthusiasts with scenic views of the lake, forests, and streams. Bald eagle, wild turkey, red fox, gray fox, and eastern newt are among the unusual species that have been found here.

A Piedmont Prairie restoration site protects two federally listed plants, Schweinitz's sunflower and Georgia aster. The preserve is part of the Mountain Island Lake Important Bird Area, designated by the National Audubon Society due to its diversity of wintering waterfowl and breeding and migratory songbird species. The preserve also features Carolina Raptor Center, home to the Southeast's largest eagle aviary, and Historic Latta Plantation, a restored 19th century federal-style home and living history farm of James Latta, open to public tours and interpretive programs.



Habitat:

Upland Forest, Piedmont Prairie, Floodplain Forest

Seasonal Information:

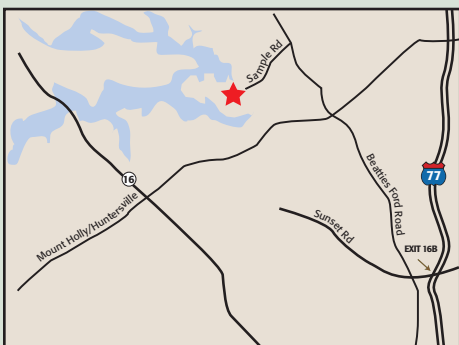
Sunflowers and other prairie plants peak mid-September to mid-October.

Additional Information:

Latta Plantation Nature Center offers interpretive displays, live native animals, and educational programs. Carolina Raptor Center and Historic Latta Plantation charge admission fees. Call for current hours and fees.

Directions:

From Interstate 77, Exit 16B. Travel west on Sunset Road approximately 1 mile. Turn right onto Beatties Ford Road and travel north 5 miles. Turn left onto Sample Road. The nature preserve entrance is 1 mile straight ahead.



Hours:

Open daily
7:00 a.m. – Sunset.

Contact Information:

Latta Plantation Nature Center
6211 Sample Road
Huntersville, NC 28078
704-875-1391
www.parkandrec.com

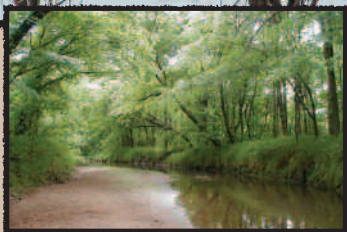


Lower McAlpine Creek and McMullen Creek Greenway

Mecklenburg County

Unique Features:

This 4-mile trail winds along McAlpine and McMullen Creeks providing excellent opportunities for wildlife observation. Visitors will discover one of the largest and most diverse floodplain forests remaining in Mecklenburg County. Observation decks near Johnston Road and numerous boardwalks along the way provide access into wetland areas normally too wet to experience.



Habitat:

Floodplain Forest

Seasonal Information:

Rusty blackbirds are reported in winter. Prothonotary warblers and red-headed woodpeckers nest in natural cavities during the spring and summer. Listen for upland chorus frogs and spring peepers in late winter.

Directions:

From Interstate 485, Exit 64A. Travel east on Pineville-Matthews Road for 1.5 miles. A gravel parking lot is on the right.

Hours:

Open daily 7:00 a.m. – Sunset.

Contact Information:

Mecklenburg County Park and
Recreation Department
5841 Brookshire Boulevard
Charlotte, NC 28216
704-336-3854
www.parkandrec.com



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McAlpine Creek Park and Greenway

Mecklenburg County

Unique Features:

Charlotte's first greenway and the first public greenway trail constructed in the western North Carolina Piedmont, McAlpine Creek extends 4 miles through floodplain forests, wetlands, and open field habitats. The adjacent 462-acre McAlpine Creek Park contains a 3-acre lake that provides numerous fishing opportunities. A beaver-created wetland provides habitat for aquatic turtles, a diversity of dragonflies, as well as wood duck, great blue heron, belted kingfisher, and red-shouldered hawk. Nearly 200 species of birds have been documented here.



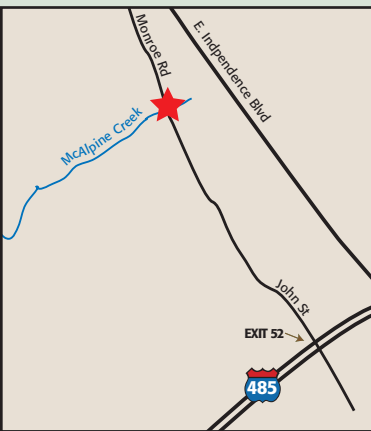
Habitat:

Upland Forest, Floodplain Forest, Wetland, Grassland

Seasonal Information:

Beavers most active spring through fall during dusk and dawn. Waterfowl peak in winter.

Directions:



From Interstate 485, Exit 52. Travel east on John Street, which becomes Monroe Road, for approximately 4 miles. The park entrance is on the right.

Hours:

Open daily 7:00 a.m. – Sunset.

Contact Information:

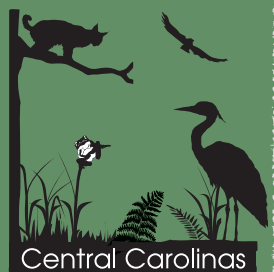
Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department
5841 Brookshire Boulevard
Charlotte, NC 28216
704-336-3854
www.parkandrec.com



Biodiversity Trail Fact:

bi•o•di•ver•si•ty (bīō-dī-vûr'sī-tē)

n. 1. The sum total of all plants, animals, fungi, and microorganisms, along with their variations and interactions. 2. A term first coined in 1986 by Harvard University biologist E.O. Wilson to replace "biological diversity" with a term more effective in communicating the concept to the public.



Central Carolinas
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Unique Features:

This 1,098-acre nature preserve located on the shores of Lake Wylie protects a steeply rolling terrain of lush hardwood forest and trickling streams that provide excellent growing conditions for more than 100 species of wildflowers and ferns. Two Piedmont Prairie restoration sites protect a federally endangered plant (Schweinitz's sunflower) and several rare plants. A diversity of uncommon animals, including spotted salamander, Gulf Coast spiny softshell turtle, and loggerhead shrike, has been documented. The preserve is also among the best areas in Mecklenburg County to view pileated woodpecker. Hikers will enjoy the seven miles of trails including the Four Seasons Trail, a 1-mile loop that is paved and handicap accessible.

**Habitat:**

Upland Forest, Piedmont Prairie, Floodplain Forest

Seasonal Information:

Spring wildflowers peak the first week in April. Sunflowers and other prairie plants peak mid-September to mid-October.

Additional Information:

McDowell Nature Center offers interpretive displays, live native animals, and educational programs. Campground open 7 days a week year-round.

Directions:

From Interstate 77, Exit 90. Travel west on Carowinds Boulevard approximately 3 miles to N.C. 49 (S. Tryon Road). Turn left on N.C. 49, which becomes York Road, and travel 4 miles. The nature preserve entrance is on the right.

Hours:

Open daily 7:00 a.m. - Sunset

Contact Information:

McDowell Nature Center
15222 York Road
Charlotte, NC 28278
704-588-5224
www.parkandrec.com



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McGuire Nuclear Station and Energy Explorium

Mecklenburg County

Unique Features:

Located on 32,475-acre Lake Norman, the largest reservoir on the Catawba River, the Energy Explorium serves as a visitor center for McGuire Nuclear Station



and the region. Indoor exhibits focus on hydroelectric, fossil, and nuclear power generation but discuss environmental management practices of the site. Outside, visitors can explore the 1-mile nature trail, interactive exhibits on the lake's wildlife, and demonstration butterfly garden. Views of the lake are numerous and highlighted by osprey nesting platforms and a small songbird nest box trail. Excellent fishing opportunities exist along the station's discharge canal and from a handicap accessible pier.

Habitats:

Upland Forest

Seasonal Information:

Ospreys nest April – July.

Additional Information:

Field guides and binoculars are available for use on the nature trail. Site subject to closure during high homeland security alerts. Call for current status.

Directions:

From Interstate 77, Exit 25. Travel west approximately 4 miles on N.C. 73. Turn right into the McGuire Nuclear Station entrance. Follow signs to the Energy Explorium.

Hours:

Monday - Friday
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.,
Saturday – Sunday
12:00 – 5:00 p.m.



Contact Information:

McGuire Nuclear Station
(MG03E)
13339 Hagers
Ferry Road
Huntersville, NC 28078
704-875-5600
www.duke-energy.com



Unique Features:

This 4,742-acre park bordered by Lake Tillery and the Yadkin-Pee Dee River is located in the Uwharrie Mountains, one of the oldest ranges in the eastern United States. Wildlife viewing opportunities abound with the shoreline trails providing views of muskrat, beaver, turtles, belted kingfisher, great blue heron, and an occasional bald eagle. Nearly 170 species of birds have been documented along with a variety of reptiles and amphibians. White-tailed deer are abundant. Over 30 miles of trails, approximately 16 miles are open to horseback riders, traverse a variety of terrain and provide access to the park's four major peaks, the highest of which reaches 936 feet. Visitors can explore the 19th-century homestead of Dr. Francis Kron, the first medical doctor to practice in the southern Piedmont of North Carolina and take advantage of a wide variety of ranger-led programs.

**Habitat:**

Upland Forest, Floodplain Forest, Wetland

Seasonal Information:

Best opportunities to view bald eagles are during the winter as they search for fish below the Falls Lake dam.

Additional Information:

Seasonal canoe rentals. Swimming pool open June - Labor Day.

Directions:

From N.C. 24 East. In Albemarle, turn left on N.C. 740 and travel approximately 6 miles. Turn right on Morrow Mountain Road, which leads directly into the park.

Hours:

November – February 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

March and October, 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

April, May, September, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

June - August, 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Contact Information:

Morrow Mountain State Park
49104 Morrow
Mountain Road
Albemarle, NC 28001
704-982-4402
www.ncsparks.net



Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge

Anson County

Unique Features:

This 8,443-acre national wildlife refuge, the westernmost in North Carolina, is home to a diversity of wildlife species including 180 species of birds, 49 species of reptiles and amphibians, 28 species of mammals, and 20 fish species. Rare or unusual species include bald eagle, southern flying squirrel, and prothonotary warbler. Suitable habitat exists for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, although the species was last observed on the refuge in 2001. Located along the Pee Dee River and Brown's Creek, the refuge protects the largest expanse of bottomland hardwood forest in the Piedmont. The floodplain and artificial impoundments are wintering grounds for over 10,000 waterfowl and the refuge is designated as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. Active habitat management through prescribed burning, planting warm-season grasses, and cooperative farming agreements provides additional wildlife food and cover. Observation areas and a system of roads and trails provide public access.



Habitat:

Grassland, Wetland, Floodplain Forest, Upland Forest, Piedmont Prairie, Coniferous Forest

Seasonal Information:

Hunting allowed during established seasons. Hunters must register at Refuge Headquarters. Public fishing allowed March 15 – October 15.

Directions:

From U.S. 74 East. Travel north on U.S. 52 for approximately 7 miles. Turn right into refuge entrance.



Hours:

Open daily from 1 hour prior to sunrise until 1 hour after sunset

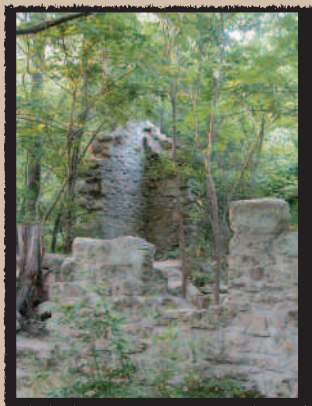
Contact Information:

Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge
Route 1, Box 92 – U.S. 52 North,
Wadesboro, NC 28170
704-694-4424
peedee.fws.gov



Unique Features:

This 735-acre nature preserve protects the major tributaries of Reedy Creek, a County-significant natural heritage site, and areas of cultural significance including the ruins of the Robinson Rockhouse, circa 1780. Ten miles of hiking trails allow access to the preserve's forests, lakes, and streams. Reedy Creek Nature Preserve provides habitat for 109 species of birds, 15 species of mammals, 20 species of reptiles, and 12 species of amphibians. Among the unusual species that have been found at the preserve are: Conjuror's nut, pale hickory, spotted salamander, Gulf Coast spiny softshell turtle, and broad-winged hawk. Kentucky warblers have been documented during the breeding season in the dense undergrowth along the Reedy Creek floodplain. This is one of the last known breeding locations remaining for this species in Mecklenburg County. An active beaver colony inhabits Kingfisher Pond and great blue heron, green heron, and red-shouldered hawk are regularly observed around the preserve's other two lakes.

**Habitats:**

Upland Forest, Grassland, Floodplain Forest

Seasonal Information:

Spring wildflowers peak the first week in April. Beavers are most active spring through fall during dusk and dawn.

Additional Information:

Reedy Creek Nature Center offers interpretive displays, live native animals, and educational programs. Adjacent 125-acre Reedy Creek Park provides picnic shelters, playgrounds, and athletic fields.

Directions:

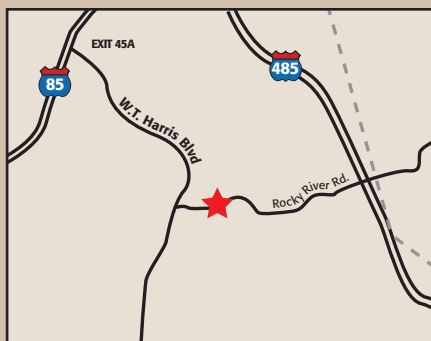
From Interstate 85, Exit 45A. Travel on East W.T. Harris Blvd to the 4th stoplight and turn left onto Rocky River Road. Travel east on Rocky River Road for approximately 1/2 mile, turn left at the stop light, and then just past the fire station turn right into Reedy Creek Park and Nature Preserve. For best access to the nature preserve, follow the main park road to a t-intersection and stop sign, then turn right and proceed to the Nature Center parking lot.

Hours:

Open daily
7:00 a.m. – Sunset

Contact Information:

Reedy Creek Nature Center
2900 Rocky River Road
Charlotte, NC 28215
704-598-8857
www.parkandrec.com



Unique Features:

This 450-acre park along the Catawba River is an excellent place to see a diversity of plants and wildlife. Twelve miles of hiking trails through all types of terrain guide visitors throughout the mostly forested park. Of the 12 miles of trails, 7.8 are open to mountain bikers. The trails cover all habitats in the park, enabling nature lovers to view great blue herons and waterfowl near the river, wild turkeys and white-tailed deer in the upland areas, and seasonal wildflowers in the grassy meadows. Bald eagles are occasionally spotted along the river.

**Habitats:**

Upland Forest, Floodplain Forest

Additional Information:

Biking and canoeing/kayaking require permits. All visitors must sign in at kiosk upon arrival.

Hours:

Friday – Monday Only

November – February 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

March & October 8:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

April – September 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Directions:

From Interstate 40, Exit 132. Travel north on N.C. 16 approximately 8 miles. The park entrance is well marked and on the right.

Contact Information:

Riverbend Park

6700 NC Highway 16 North

Conover, NC 28613

828-256-9157

www.co.catawba.nc.us/depts/parks/rbndmain.asp



Unique Features:

This approximately 1-mile public trail within a 324-acre privately owned preserve is protected by a conservation easement with Catawba Lands Conservancy. The trail follows the South Fork of the Catawba River with scenic views of the river, rock outcrops, and an historic mill dam. A bald cypress swamp borders the trail for a short distance.

**Habitats:**

Floodplain Forest, Upland Forest, Wetland

Seasonal Information:

Spring wildflowers and mountain laurels peak mid-April to mid-May.

Directions:

From Interstate 85, Exit 17. Travel U.S. 321 North approximately 9 miles to Exit 20. Turn left at the bottom of the ramp onto S.R. 155/U.S. 321 Business North (becomes Aspen Street) and travel approximately 2.7 miles. Turn left onto Southside Road and travel approximately 0.3 miles until it becomes South Fork Road. Continue to travel straight on South Fork Road until reaching a stop sign. Turn right onto Laboratory Road and cross the South Fork River. The trail parking lot is on the right, immediately after crossing the river.

Hours:

Open daily sunrise to sunset.

Contact Information:

Catawba Lands
Conservancy
105 West Morehead
Street, Suite B
Charlotte, NC 28202
704-342-3330
www.catawbalands.org

**Biodiversity Trail Fact:**

The two greatest threats to biodiversity in the region are habitat loss and the invasion of exotic plants and animals. Over 40 acres of natural areas are converted to other uses each day while invasive exotics outcompete native wildlife and negatively alter important habitats.



Central Carolinas

BIODIVERSITY TRAIL

23

South Mountains State Park

Cleveland County

Unique Features:

Nestled deep in the North Carolina foothills, this approximately 18,000-acre state park is the perfect place to experience nature. Here you can see a majestic mountain range peeking out from the gently rolling landscape of the Piedmont. Due to the park's location in the transition zone between the Mountain and Piedmont regions, a unique blending of flora and fauna are found here. The park comes alive with a symphony of chirping during the spring and summer months as at least 66 species of birds are known to nest here. In fact, South Mountains is designated as a North Carolina Important Bird Area. Walk along the park's 40 miles of trails, 30 miles of which are open to horseback riding and 18 miles are open to mountain bikes, and enjoy a variety of beautiful wildflowers, including Jack-in-the-pulpit, lady slipper and foam flower. The park includes elevations up to 3,000 feet, a waterfall dropping 80 feet and over 800 species of plants, more than 100 of which are federal or state listed endangered or rare species.



Habitats:

Upland Forest, Cove Forest

Additional Information:

A special license is needed for trout fishing. North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission rules and regulations apply.

Directions:

From Interstate 40, Exit 105. Travel south on N.C. 18 for 9 miles and turn right onto S.R. 1913 (Sugarloaf Road). Travel approximately 6 miles and turn left onto S.R. 1924 (Old N.C. 18). Travel approximately 4 miles and turn right onto S.R. 1901 (Ward's Gap Road). Travel 1.5 miles and turn right onto S.R. 1904 (South Mountains Park Avenue) which leads directly into the park.

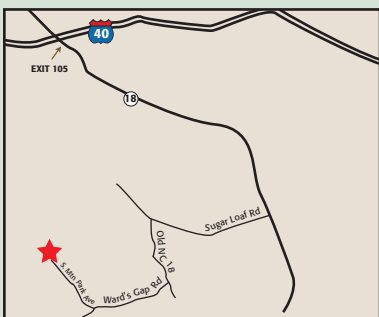
Hours:

November-February, 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

March and October, 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

April, May, September, 8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

June-August, 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.



Contact Information:

South Mountains State Park
3001 South Mountains State
Park Avenue
Connelly Springs, NC 28612
828-433-4772
www.ncsparks.net

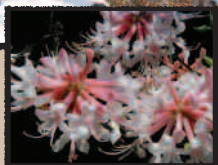


UNC-Charlotte Botanical Gardens

Mecklenburg County

Unique Features:

Located on the east side of the University campus, the Botanical Gardens include two outdoor gardens and the eight-room McMillan Greenhouse. The 7-acre Van Landingham Glen provides a woodland setting and is home to many hundred species of native plants of the Carolinas. Regions within the Glen mimic coastal plain, piedmont, and mountain habitats, providing a broad range of ecological diversity in one place. A selection of plants along the trails are clearly labeled and seasonal brochures highlight particular plants at their prime. The Glen also hosts one of the most diverse rhododendron gardens in the Southeast, displaying maximum color in late April and early May. While visiting, don't miss the displays at the greenhouse and the adjacent, 3-acre Susie Harwood Garden. The greenhouse features orchids, carnivorous and bog plants, a rainforest conservatory, and desert room. The Harwood Garden features a gazebo overlooking a pond with waterfalls, a winter garden trail, decorative rockwork and ornamental bridges, and many choice selections of woody and herbaceous plants from around the world.



Habitat:

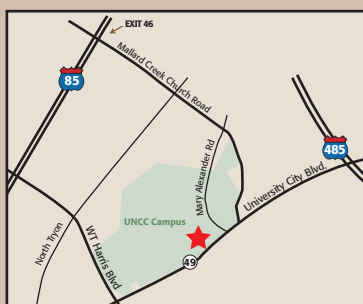
Upland Forest, Floodplain Forest

Additional Information:

Visitors to the Botanical Gardens must obtain a weekday parking permit, place it inside your windshield, and park in designated areas across Michael Craver Road from the greenhouse. Permits are located at the Parking Services Office, adjacent to the parking lot. No permit is required on the weekends. Admission is free.

Directions:

From Interstate 85, Exit 46. Travel east on Mallard Creek Church Road for approximately 1.5 miles. Turn right onto Mary Alexander Road. Continue 0.5 mile onto the UNC-Charlotte campus and turn right onto Michael Craver Road. Immediately to your right is a small parking area with designated Gardens/Greenhouse visitor spaces.



Hours:

Gardens open daily 7:00 a.m. to Sunset.

Greenhouse open Monday - Saturday, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.



Contact Information:

University of North Carolina at Charlotte Botanical Gardens

McMillan Greenhouse

9201 University City Boulevard • Charlotte, NC 28223

704-687-2364 • gardens.uncc.edu

Wildlife Watching Etiquette

The Biodiversity Trail is designed to provide opportunities for people to observe wildlife in their natural habitats. You can increase your viewing opportunities and the enjoyment for you and others by:

- using binoculars, spotting scopes and viewing blinds for a closer yet non-disruptive look at wildlife
- moving slowly and quietly to minimize disturbance
- avoiding scented lotions and colognes which can broadcast your presence
- staying clear of nests and dens so parents will not abandon young
- recognizing animal alarm signals and behavior changes
- avoiding artificial calls and lures which disrupt natural animal behavior
- resisting the impulse to offer human food, which can cause animals expecting handouts to become aggressive and is generally not healthy for wildlife
- photographing wildlife using a telephoto lens from a vehicle or viewing blind
- avoiding the urge to chase, herd, flush or make noises
- leaving plants and other natural features alone
- observing all rules and regulations
- returning the property to the condition it was when you arrived
- staying on trails and roads to minimize your impact on the environment
- helping others become responsible wildlife watchers

Report Wildlife Observations

Staff at most sites are very interested in what their visitors are seeing, and many keep detailed records of wildlife sightings and use these to help improve their habitat management programs. Report your observations or species lists to site staff, nature centers, or visitors centers. Or send them to: Conservation Science Office, 9401 Plaza Road Extension, Charlotte, NC 28215. Remember to include your contact information as well as the date, time, and specific location of your wildlife sighting. Even observations of the most common species can be useful.

www.parkandrec.com

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